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INTELLIGENCE NOTE

BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

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MOROCCO: HASSAN MOVES TO END "STATE OF EXCEPTION"

In a July 9 birthday message to the Moroccan people, King Hassan announced plans to end the "state of exception" by which he has ruled since June 7, 1965. He intends to submit constitutional revisions to a referendum on July 24, then provide for a two-round election, on August 21 and 28, for a unicameral parliament. While he has not yet made public the precise powers of the new legislative body, they will presumably be very limited and clearly subordinate to those of the monarch.

Bending to Domestic Pressures?

The King's initiative seems to some observers a concession to various domestic political pressures. Many educated Moroccans and the political parties have resented the longevity and blatant absolutism of his emergency rule. Anti-monarchical sentiment has risen since the fall of Libya's King Idris in September 1969. Moreover, Hassan's regime has been beset from several quarters since late 1969. The discovery of a subversive group prompted the rounding up of some 400 left wing dissidents throughout the country. Student unrest of unprecedented intensity led to university strikes lasting nearly 11 weeks. Revelations of official corruption embarrassed

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NYWD 869041
By ST/WSH Date 6/10/88

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- 2 -

the government and raised nagging doubts about the accountability of high officials. Irredentist elements, led by the conservative Istiqlal Party, erupted in outrage after Hassan recently gave up Morocco's longstanding claims to Algerian-held territory.

...Or Following a Plan?

None of these pressures, however, appears genuinely to have threatened Hassan's rule or even influenced significantly his decision to restore parliament at this time. He has had constitutional revisions under consideration for several years. Moreover, various indications, starting in early 1969 and multiplying after the October local elections, have suggested the probability of a timetable to lift the "state of exception" sometime in 1970. Nonetheless, Hassan has taken extraordinary precautions to ensure the success of his plans and to forestall any organized opposition. He made his announcement with little forewarning and deliberately set early dates for the voting exercises to coincide with the summer vacation season. He has also issued veiled warnings to the electorate that rejection of the referendum would mean continuation of the "state of exception" and to political parties that those who preach boycott would find themselves excluded from the political system.

Stacking the Seats

Hassan's careful preparations also extend to the composition of the parliament. He apparently plans to draw at least one-half

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NINW 869041
By ST/VS Date 12/10/88

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- 3 -

of the membership from existing--and largely apolitical--elected bodies: provincial assemblies, municipal and communal councils, and professional chambers representing business, labor, and agriculture. He is encouraging his cabinet ministers and other loyal aides to run for the remaining seats. He presumably expects that his efficient Minister of Interior will supervise the elections with the same magisterial aplomb he showed in the local council vote of October 3, 1969 (when he was able to announce complete election results, including statistical analyses of the age group, education level, and political affiliation of the 11,166 winning candidates, less than 24 hours after the polls closed).

Short-term Success Likely

The short-term objectives of King Hassan seem assured. Besides gathering great credit with the public for his initiative, he can almost certainly look forward to a massive referendum victory and minimum-risk parliamentary elections. The major opposition parties, while unhappy over the role and makeup of the parliament and apprehensive about electoral rigging, will be under severe pressure to "cooperate" with the palace and to participate. However they decide, Hassan will be able to install a loyalist-dominated legislature in early September and thereby add what could become a genuinely needed safety valve.

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NYW 869041
By SP/WSW Date 6/10/98

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- 4 -

Longer-term Prospects Uncertain

Hassan's future actions will determine whether he has created a new institutional bulwark for his monarchy or has opened a Pandora's box. He will face a formidable problem in making the new parliament a credible political institution. Over the past nine years he has used the "divide and manipulate" technique to hold power. He has factionalized the political elite, including his most fervent supporters, to the point of immobilism. Just as he divided the loyal majority in the 1963-65 parliament, he could do the same with the loyal majority in the new body. Indeed, unless Hassan decides to change his tactics and to promote the development of a cohesive working majority, perhaps under the aegis of a new political party or under another form of leadership authority vested outside his person, he will risk immobilism in the new assembly and eventually another breakdown in parliament-palace relations. The representative character and power of the legislature also appear crucial. If the deputies lack genuine grassroots support and have no real power, they could seem to the Moroccan public like a band of self-serving sycophants. This lack of confidence could be of critical importance, for even today Moroccans under 30 years old, and comprising around two-thirds of the total populace, tend to have little respect for either regime or parties.

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